

NOT BOASTING, BUT TRUSTING

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Not of works, lest any man should boast.”
Ephesians 2:9

THIS is very plain. There is no mistaking the sense. We are saved by grace, and not by our own doings. A reason is assigned. If we were saved by our own doings, it would be natural and certain that we should boast. It is well that the apostle is so very explicit here and elsewhere upon this doctrine, for men will fall against and blunt the edge of his statement.

Self-righteousness is the natural religion of every degraded heart. Only the Spirit of God can make a man really receive and acknowledge the truth. The apostle seems determined that if any reject it, it shall not be for want of clearness in his statement as a teacher. He does not beat about the bush, or go round about, or mince matters, but he comes at once to the point, “By grace are ye saved,” and then he gives the negative, the backstroke of the sword, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

This is the old controversy of Christianity from the very beginning. The first heavy fire of the Gospel ordinance was directed against the Judaizers. They said salvation was by ceremonies and the works of the law. In all sorts of shapes and ways, sometimes straightforwardly, and sometimes cunningly, they tried to get into the Christian church the idea that the works of men could have some merit in them, and contribute in some degree to their salvation.

The apostle was a very sturdy opponent of this subtle innovation. His epistle to the Romans, his epistle to the Galatians, his epistle to the Ephesians, and indeed, all his writings, seem like so many cannons dragged to the front, and discharging red-hot shot against the very idea of salvation by the works of the law. “By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified,” says he, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Further down in the history of the Christian church this old conflict was renewed very vehemently by Martin Luther and his brother Reformers against the Church of Rome. You must not think that the great point of difference between the Protestants and Romanists is whether we shall obey that respectable old gentleman at Rome or not, or whether we shall have our ministers dressed in blue and scarlet and fine linen, or in common broadcloth, like ourselves. Those trifles may become important as ostensible signs of profession, but they are not the main point at issue. They are merely the husk of the controversy.

The real battle between the Papists and the Protestants turns on this. Are men saved by works, or are they saved by grace? All the reformers that ever tried to reform the Church of Rome by interfering with her mummeries and her monasteries, her priests and their vestments, her holy days and celebrations, and I do not know what besides, were all just fiddling away with a wasted force at some of the external branches of that horrible old upas tree, but when Luther came fresh from the cell with that light still beaming from his eye, “We are justified by faith,” then it was that the axe was laid at the root of this tree.

There is nothing wanted to bring down popery but the constant promulgation of this one truth, “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,” for salvation is not of man, neither by man, it is of the Lord, and it is given to as many as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. In fact, this is the standing controversy today, before which all other controversies dwindle into insignificance.

The outside world still has it that they will be saved by their own doings. The host of God's elect, stripped of their own righteousness, and made to put on the righteousness of Christ, stand each man with his sword upon his side, and his shield in his hand, defensive for this one truth, this vital truth, the all-important truth of the Gospel, for this, brethren, we ought, every one of us, to be prepared to shed our blood. To obliterate or to disguise this truth, were to put out the lamp that illuminates this dark world, take away the only ointment that can heal earth's wounds, to destroy the only medicine that will ever cure the diseases of humanity. "Justified by faith, saved by grace, not of works, lest any man should boast."

At this time, briefly, let us consider *a great negative*—"not of works," *a great reason*—"lest any man should boast," and then throw in one after the other, with very little order, *a few thoughts about this great matter*.

I. A GREAT NEGATIVE—"Not of works."

Now, brethren, it must not be of works, because that way has been tried, and has proved *a complete failure*. Adam was placed in the garden of Eden under circumstances peculiarly conducive to his happiness. The law which was to test him was remarkably simple. It contained but one command, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." Adam was not, as we are, vitiated, his constitution had no tendency to sin, he was pure and perfect, with well balanced judgment, and without bias one way or the other. He had never sinned, he need not ever to have sinned.

It seems to me, he had nothing to gain by sin. His paradise was as perfect as it could be. God had been pleased to give him everything necessary to make him abundantly happy. But under these circumstances, the most favorable in which humanity was ever placed, the way of acceptance before God by works broke lamentably down. Whether after a short or long term of probation, we will not say—it is folly to speak where Scripture is silent—certain it is that, when tempted, he lapsed, for the woman took the fruit, and the man also partook of it.

Then acceptance by works became like a potter's vessel, shivered with a rod of iron. Man had tried the way of merit, and bitter, indeed, was the award. Despair, you sons of Adam, where your father failed, though hitherto untainted, you with perverted will, with imagination apt to picture pleasantries in sin, with judgment warped and strained by innate depravity, by the infection of example, and by the force of surrounding circumstances—think not that you can stand upright where perfect Adam fell. Hope not to find a way back through the gates of paradise, for there stands the cherub with his flaming sword still, and no flesh living shall henceforth be saved by his works.

The way of salvation by works is utterly unsuitable for us. It is not only fruitless, proved to be so, but it is inconsistent. Anything which involves an impossibility it is vain to propose. Propose to a man without feet that he should walk, or to a man without eyes that he should distinguish colors—you see the folly, but is it not equally absurd to recommend a convict to seek a peerage?

It is impossible for any one of us to obtain merits before God. We have all confessedly sinned already. Our present status debars us from entering the list for future honors. By what means are we to put away this old sin? There it stands. Suppose we obey God from this time forth till we die without a single fault, we shall then only have done what it was our duty to perform, and God had a right to expect of us. There will be no balance left, nothing to put *per contra* against our sins, nothing to our credit as a reduction of our liabilities, we should only have paid the current account, supposing that to be possible. The debt will still remain there.

The old score—who is to pay that? "Oh!" says one, "we apply to Christ for that." No, no, sir, if it is to be by works, you must keep to works, for the apostle lays it down in the eleventh of Romans that, "if it be of grace, it is not of works, and if it be of works, it is not of grace." Two principles these, which will not mingle, have which you like. They are like oil and water, or rather, like fire and water, they are opposed to each other. If Christ is to save you, He must do it altogether. He will never be a make-weight for you, depend upon it. He did not come into this world to make up a few deficiencies—not at all so. He will not have you boasting, He will not have you sharing with Him the honor of your salvation.

God demands of every man a perfect life, having all sinned, we cannot bring Him a perfect life. You have cracked that vase, well, if you do not break it again, it is cracked already. “Oh!” but you tell me, “it is only in a little place.” Yes, but if there is only one link in the chain broken which drags up the miner from the bowels of the earth, it is quite enough for his destruction that one link is broken. There is no need to have a dozen links fretted through with rust, the one flaw is sufficient.

If you will be saved by works, you must be absolutely perfect, for it is inconsistent with the justice of God that He should accept any but perfect obedience from the creatures that come under His sway. Can you render this?

If you know yourselves, you will say “we cannot.” You will look on the flames that Moses saw when Sinai was on a blaze, you will tremble and despair of ever saving yourselves thus.

But again, while the way has been proven to be fruitless, and is certainly unsuitable, it is a way which, with all his talking, *no man ever does fairly try*. I have often noticed that those who prate loudest of good works are those that have the fewest good deeds to make mention of. Like little traders in the streets with their little stock of commodities, they had need cry and advertise their wares because they have so little to sell, whereas a diamond merchant or dealer in bullion sits still and never makes a noise at all because he has precious treasure by him.

Your hard talkers about good works generally come from some disreputable haunt. They will even boast that their sentiments are better than their habits. Well they need be. I have seen them put their black and smutty fingers upon the bright Gospel of Christ and say, “This leads to licentiousness.” Pity, then, sir, you should ever approach it, since you can find licentiousness fast enough without it! Pure minds see God in the Gospel. They veil their faces, and bow before its majesty.

Ah! well might I preach up morality, but not as the way of salvation, or what would be the result of it? What said Chalmers during the early part of his life? He said, “I preached up sobriety till nearly all my followers became great drinkers, I preached up honesty till I manufactured thieves, the more I preached of the right which man ought to do, the more I found men doing wrong.” These are not his words, but they are the sense of his own solemn confession when he came to read the pure Gospel, and began to preach it with all his heart.

So is it with every man, and I suppose it ever will be. Dry essays about duty run off and slide like oil down a slab of marble, while the proclamation of the Gospel of the grace of God in pardoning the chief of sinners attracts men to Jesus, breaks their hearts, causes them to hate sin, sets them upon reformation, makes them holy, and helps them to persevere even to the end. “Not of works,” says the text—and we come back to it. If salvation were by works, and could be so wrought out, hark! then Calvary would be a superfluity, the cross of Christ, with all its wonders, would be a work of supererogation on God’s part, the work of redemption would be a subject of derision for us.

Is there no salvation, or is there salvation somehow else? Must God come down and take the form of man, and in that form must the Christ of God suffer even unto death, and all for nothing—for it comes to that! If man can save himself, what need you that ado, you angels? Hush your Christmas carols! What need you those gazing eyes and that absorbing wonder, as you watch the manifestation of the Lord of glory, incarnate amongst men? What needs it that the prophets talk of the Lamb of God, and point us to the infinite sacrifice? What needs it that Jesus wears the crown of thorns, and bows His head to die for us?

There are men who say we can work our own passage to the stars, and by our merits enshrine ourselves amongst the blessed. Sirs, which shall I believe—that God has wrought a work that need not have been, or that you are under the spell of a fatal delusion? “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” You can find no way to heaven but by the cross.

*“Could your zeal no respite know,
Could your tears for ever flow;*

*All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and Christ alone."*

Those persons who prate most of salvation by works, whether they acknowledge it or not, do really *lower the standard of holiness*, and abate the dignity of the law of God. You come to probe them, and the old story which Whitefield and John Vaudois fought against so valiantly of Saxon obedience, is the petition of the self-righteous man's creed. "Well," says he, "I can't keep all the law, I own that. As to thoughts, and deeds, and words, I can't be quite clean, but I will do my best."

Now, what is this but to lower altogether the law of God, because you cannot come up to God's law? Is the Almighty God to come down to your terms? Do you think to barter with Him? Can your miserable three farthings in the pound satisfy a divine law? This never will be. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," saith Christ, "but not one jot or one tittle of the law shall fail." This is the Word of God spoken from Sinai, "Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." God will not take part payment.

Holiness, let me tell you, sirs, is a very different thing from that morality which some men boast of. Why, I almost hold my breath when I encounter some men's morality that they talk so much of. Those loose tongues that chatter so glibly against the Gospel as fomenting licentiousness, if they did but once cry, "God be merciful to us sinners," would come much nearer to playing their right part. Men that are sinning daily, in open violation of common virtue, will talk as though they were pure in all their tastes, holy in all their thoughts, and above suspicion in all their lives.

Oh! no. God's holiness is something grander, sublimer than you and I have guessed at, and we shall not reach to that by our works, at any rate, for they are blotted, and blurred, and marred, and spoiled upon the wheel, like the figures of an ill-taught potter, and we cannot presume to exhibit them before the living God.

II. A GREAT REASON IS GIVEN—a few words on it—"Not of works, lest any man should boast."

If any man could get to heaven by his own works, what a boaster he naturally would be! I am sure he would be so on earth. This is the part he would play. He would hear that God, in His mercy, had been forgiving some great sinner, and that there was joy in heaven over him, and he would say, "I cannot take my share in such pleasures as that. I have never transgressed His commandments, I find myself very tightly bound, and I do not get much joy of it. Here is that renegade who has been given to sin, and he is to be saved. I do not like it."

You know where to read the story in Luke's Gospel, "He was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." Pretty specimen of a son, but the picture of what any man would be who felt, "I owe God nothing, I am all right, I am saved by my own works."

What a churl he would be in the church! I am sure I should be very sorry to admit such a man to our assemblies. I should feel that he was quite out of place with poor sinners saved by grace like ourselves, who have nothing to boast of. It would make the whole church wretched to have such people in church fellowship. Why, if we did not idolize them, we would hate them. I do not know which of the two it would be, certainly they would be much out of place in our assemblies with their boasting.

And what would they do in heaven? Why, the very reverse of what all the spirits are doing who are there, these all sing, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," they would have to say, "We kept our raiment white ourselves." When the ransomed spirits cast their crowns at His feet, the self-righteous souls would hold high their crests and wear their tiaras, saying, "We have won them ourselves, and we have a right to them." It would spoil heaven. Heaven would not be the

perfection of harmony. Such beings would occasion discord in the glory land, a greater discord than seen in the universe since the fall. No, no! it is “Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Do I hear somebody say, “We do not maintain that men are to be saved by works altogether, but partly by God’s grace, and partly by their own works.” Well, I will suppose for a moment that this strange monster can be manufactured—a saint compounded part of grace, and part of works.

Well now, in what proportion are these two opposite qualities to be brought together? how much grace, and how much works? Half works? Yes. Then how about those poor fellows who come very near half? Well, one quarter works? Yes. And then three-quarters grace? Well, perhaps some more, and some less. Some three-quarters works, some half works, and some only one-eighth works, and so on.

You will have to arrange them very orderly, you know, and depend upon it that as soon as they find out the proportion of their salvation that was by works, in that proportion they will begin to boast. I should I know, and I do not think I should be to blame if I did. I should say, “Now, here am I saved half by my works. Here is a lot of these poor believers in Christ, who were saved altogether by grace, but I have contributed of my own means a full half to my salvation. I do not mind just lifting my crown a little—just own I had help in getting it on my head, but I am not going to cast it down at His feet, every man has a right to what is his due.”

I thought Napoleon did a good thing when, on the day of his coronation, he took his crown, and put it on his own head. Why should he not take the symbol that was his due? And if you get to heaven, one half by grace and one half by works, you will say, “Atonement profited me a little, but integrity profited me much more.”

Do I seem to you to talk sarcastically? Be it admitted I do. Were it possible for me to kick this idea of human merit like a football round the world, sirs, were it possible to set it in the pillory of scorn, and pelt it with I know not what of filth, I should feel that I had the apostle Paul standing by my side and saying, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,” and I should hear him say of his own righteousness, “I count it as dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him.” He could not have taken a coarser figure, nor one which expressed more thoroughly his hearty contempt of everything like self-righteousness. “I count it as dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him.” “Lest any man should boast,” this is a good and sufficient reason why salvation should not be of works.

Now—

III. A FEW THOUGHTS WITHOUT ORDER, but I hope they may catch your attention, and stick in your memory.

Some say—I know it is a common observation—this talking about sinners coming to Christ just as they are, and trusting in Him alone for their salvation, is very dangerous. Respectable persons, and people who think themselves qualified to be critics, generally make some such observation as this, “It is very dangerous.”

Now, my dear friends, if you will condescend to listen for a minute, I would remind you that *neither you nor I have anything to do with making the Gospel*. We may think the Gospel ought to be so and so, but that does not make it so. And if I should choose to think, or if you should, that such and such a doctrine is very dangerous, that neither makes it true nor makes it false, for after all, the great solemn appeal about all matters of religion is not to you, nor yet to me. We stand on an equal footing there, you may think one thing, and I may think another. But the Judge—the Judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail, must decide.

The great question is, “What saith the Scriptures? What does the Old Book say?” If it does not teach that the salvation of a sinner is altogether by grace, and not of works, it does not teach anything at all, and there are no words in any language that do mean anything. I must be made to believe that black is white, and that God has purposely and willfully written a book to deceive us, before I can believe salvation to be by works, for the expressions about this matter are not a few, they are not casual, they are not dark and mysterious, they are not metaphorical, they are plain, simple, and obvious.

I challenge any man—I will not say any theologian—but any man of common sense that can read the Bible—whether he use our version, or prefer the original—if he will but read it honestly, he can come to no other conclusion in reading the epistles of Paul than this, that salvation is by grace through faith in the merits of Christ, and not at all by the works of the law. Now, that is a thing that ought to decide and end the matter.

I ask you not to heed anything I say, do not take my word for it, my *ipse dixit* is nought, it is in God's Book, and on your heads be it if you deny it. "Oh!" said one to another, "I didn't like your preaching the other night." "What didn't you like in it?" "I didn't like your preaching up salvation to sinners." "Oh! that is nothing to me, the quarrel is not between you and me, but between you and my Master, you must settle that with Him. I have nothing to do with manufacturing doctrines, my business is to retail them as I find them in the Scripture. If you do not like them, you must leave them, but it is at your own peril." Let me say to all of you, I beseech you cast not away your own soul.

Every one of us ought to remember that a *great deal of that commodity in this world known by the name of good works, is not good works at all*. What is a good work? I should venture to say that anything that has in it the element of selfishness is not good. You may question that, but I think it is the highest virtue to be unselfish. If a man be found to be virtuous, as we say, with the design of benefiting himself, has not he spoiled his virtue? The very design of seeking merit by what he does, spoils the possibility of merit. A man is not a servant of God while he is only serving himself. It is only when he gets rid of self that he becomes truly good.

To pray may be good or not, according to whether it is real prayer. To attend the house of God, or give alms to the poor, may be good or not good, according to the heart. But external duties are not good works. Nay, though a man should be faultless in his external life, yet if the motive were sinister and the desires unclean, his works would all taste of the fountain from whence they came, and not be good in the sight of God. Did it never strike you that in our works the heart must always be the great matter?

Cowper, in his *Task*, has very wonderfully wrought out this subject in the best blank verse. He pictures two footmen employed by you—one of them is a very polite, quick, nimble, handy fellow—but as he says, he serves you for your house, your housemaid, and your pay. Let either of these be gone, and he is gone too. But the true servant is Charles, that stands behind the chair, that is troubled if your appetite seems to fail, that has been with you from a boy, that if you were poor, and hadn't any pay to give him, would cling to the posts of your doors, that would live for you and die for you—that is the man whom you love as a servant.

So it is with virtue, the best and highest of good works are those that spring from love, real love to God. Now, where do you find this? In the man who rejects Christ? No, his works are those of a slavish fear, he does not serve God out of love, but because he trembles at the thought of hell. But when a soul is brought to trust in Jesus, then the heart loves God, the service of God becomes a great delight, and the man who says, "I am not saved by works," works ten times harder than ever he would have done if he had hoped to be saved by his own doings, and his works are better works, because he has devoted love which infuses into them a sacred excellency which else had not been there.

Be it forever known and understood, that when we preach salvation by grace, *we do not undervalue morality*. Nay, brethren, we exalt it. I will give you proof. There is a hospital, it is free to all the sick, but there is a notion about town that nobody may enter there except those who do something to heal themselves. Now, I will suppose that I am sent as a missionary to go amongst the sick and tell them, that their own health is not worth a farthing, that they are to come to the hospital gates just as they are, that at the hospital they look at disease as a qualification, and not at health. Somebody might say, "Here is this man undervaluing health."

My dear brother, I am doing no such thing. Do you think I should be trying to get these sick people into the hospital if I undervalued health? It is not health I undervalue, it is the quackery that mimics health, it is this empiricism which films over men's diseases, which had need be dealt with otherwise. Why, if thousands in London were dying because they had the notion that they could not be received at

the hospital unless they healed themselves, surely it were the kindest and best work a man could do, and the quickest means to promote the popular health, to go and disabuse men of this absurd notion.

If, my brother, when we bade you come to Christ, we told you that, after coming to Him, you might live in sin as you did before, we should be worthy to be hanged. But when we tell you that Christ is a Physician, and His church a hospital, and that He can heal you if living in sin, we do not by any means decry your morality, but only tell you that it is but a piece of quackery, until you come to Christ.

*“Speak they of morals, oh! Thou bleeding Lamb!
The best morality is love to Thee!”*

The best holiness is to love Christ and to serve Him, actuated by the motive of gratitude, and if you try merit before you come to Him, it will only plunge you into deeper sin. You cannot blot out your iniquities. Still I know the scandal will be repeated, but if any choose to repeat it, the lives of those who have preached up salvation by grace, furnish the best answer. In the days of Charles the First and Charles the Second, you would have found the party, headed by Laud in the Church of England, crying up ritual, crying up good works, you would have found on the other hand, the Puritanic party rigidly preaching up justification by faith, and salvation by grace.

Now, sirs, where did you find the country parson that preached in the morning upon good works in the afternoon? Why, with a girl on either side dancing round the Maypole, according to the Book of Sports, and if you wanted him a little later in the evening, you would have to send some trusty parish beadle to bring him in from the village alehouse.

But where is the man who preached salvation by grace whilst at the conventicle? “Oh!” says one, “he is at home, singing psalms with his family.” Doesn’t he go round the Maypole? “No, the old bigot, he never breaks the Sabbath, he says it is against the law of God.” Well, but isn’t he in the alehouse? “No, I dare say the old superstitious creature is on his knees somewhere, praying.” Everybody knows this was the fact.

The Puritanic theology bred Puritanic living, the doctrine of justification by faith made men holy, but the other party that preached this wonderful doctrine of salvation by works, went pretty far to prove that they could not be saved by their works, at any rate. The long-haired cavaliers, with their scented locks, and their abominations not fit to be uttered by pure tongue, or heard by the ear of decency—these were your work mongers, your upholders of salvation by your own doings.

But the man that ordered well his household in the fear of God, the man that could bend to God, but not to a tyrant, the man that loved his country, and would sooner die on Edge Hill or Naseby than he would lay down the faith he held dear to him, that is the man who preached that we are justified by faith, and not at all by the works of the law. You shall find holiness grows out of the one doctrine which is despised, and wickedness springs from the other, which is advertised as a panacea for all ills.

If there be any here that think they can be saved by their own works, I have no Gospel to preach to them whatever, I will not interfere with them. My Master has said that there is no need of a physician to them that are not sick. Good people, virtuous people, excellent people, you that are going to heaven all on your own account, don’t quarrel with us poor sinners, that we choose to have what you despise. If you do not want the medicine, let us drink it, and be not bitter against us if we choose another way than yours. If your road is broad enough, and there are enough companions in it, let us alone if we choose the narrow path.

But yet I cannot coolly dismiss you so. If you are naked, and poor, and miserable—I will not insult you—I counsel you by my Master, get gold tried in the fire that you may be rich, and white raiment that you may be clothed, and if you know not how you can buy it, I will tell you, it is without money and without price, it is freely given, and shall be given to you if you will. Shake your hand of that venomous serpent of your own self-confidence, shake it into the fire, I pray you, it is the best place for it. You may come with empty hands to Christ, and He will give you all your soul can want.

When you come to die, you will find that good-works theory unable to bear you up. The best of men have looked upon their lives from that closing scene in another manner than ever they did before. One said, he was gathering up all his works, his good works and his bad works too, and flinging them all overboard, that he might just simply trust in a crucified Savior.

At any rate, friend, if you are prepared to risk your soul on your works, I am not prepared to risk mine on anything that I have done. No, I am not afraid to meet the trial hour, I am not afraid to look you in the face tonight and say, “I will meet you on that tremendous day, and we will see whose confidence is the better. You shall take your works if you will, and I will take my Lord, and you shall rest in what you do, but I will not rest in anything I do.”

Oh! rest well upon Him, and I will tell you what will happen when the whirlpools of Almighty wrath shall be round about you. Your good works shall go like those deceitful lifebuoys we heard of the other day, and you shall sink. But never did a soul sink that could cling to Christ. It is an unheard of thing that Christ has ever let a sinner perish, for He has said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”

Now, whether you have been righteous or wicked, whether you can cry yourselves up, or whether you bewail yourselves that you are deep in the mire of sin—go, stretch out the hand and take Christ, turn the eye to Jesus, dying upon Calvary’s cross, and look to Him—

“There is life in a look at the Crucified One.”

There is life at this moment for you. I wish that everyone in this dense mass would look to my Master. There is grace enough in Christ for every one of you. No sinner was ever lost because there was any stint in Christ, no, but because they would not come, but thought themselves too good for Him. Come as you are—just as you are—and trust Christ, and then, mark you, you will be saved.

You will be saved from the love of sin, you will be saved from the power of it, you will begin a new and holy life, you will henceforth be full of good works, which shall abound to the glory of God, and with these good works upon you, you shall be like a tree that is covered with rich fruit, acceptable to God. Still your root shall not be your fruit, but your root shall be a simple faith in a precious Christ, whom this night I have declared unto you. So God bless you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ROMANS 5:1-9

Verse 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:* We have it tonight. We enjoy it. We delight in it, “through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Not only have we peace, but we get into the favor of God, and we stand in it. This is the grace or favor which comes of being justified. We feel a freedom now to come into our Father’s presence, because He has forgiven us for Christ’s sake. We feel at home with Him now, though once we were prodigal sons, and had wandered far away, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We have something yet in reserve—present peace, but future perfection. We have present rest, but there still remaineth a rest for the people of God. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3-5. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

So that even what might seem to be the disadvantages of this present life are made to work into advantages, and what at one time might threaten our prosperity, really conduces to it. Patience, which we never could have if we never had a trouble, is given to us, and experience, which we never could

have if we did not patiently endure the trouble, we obtain. We get pearls out of these deep seas. We get treasures out of these blazing furnaces which seem to smelt our blessings, that they may come to us rich and pure. And above all, there rises a glorious hope, never to be drowned—never to be made ashamed—because we feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts like a sweet perfume, making every part of our nature fragrant, because the Holy Ghost is there.

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

That was our character. There was no good point about us. We were ungodly, and we had no strength to mend ourselves, or to be other than ungodly. The strength for reformation had all gone. The strength for regeneration we never had. We were without strength, and then Christ died for us—died for the ungodly.

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man—*

A benevolent, loving-spirited man.

7-8. *Some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

And that is the glory of His love. While we were rebels against His government, He redeemed us. While we were far off from Him by wicked works, He sent His Son to die and bring us near. Free grace, indeed, was this—not caused by anything in us, but springing freely from the great heart of God.

9. *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

You see the force of the argument. If He loved us when we were still dead in sin, much more will He keep us and preserve us now that He has justified us. Were His enemies redeemed? Shall not His friends be kept? Did He love those who were still far off? Will He not love those who are brought near, and love us even to the end?

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